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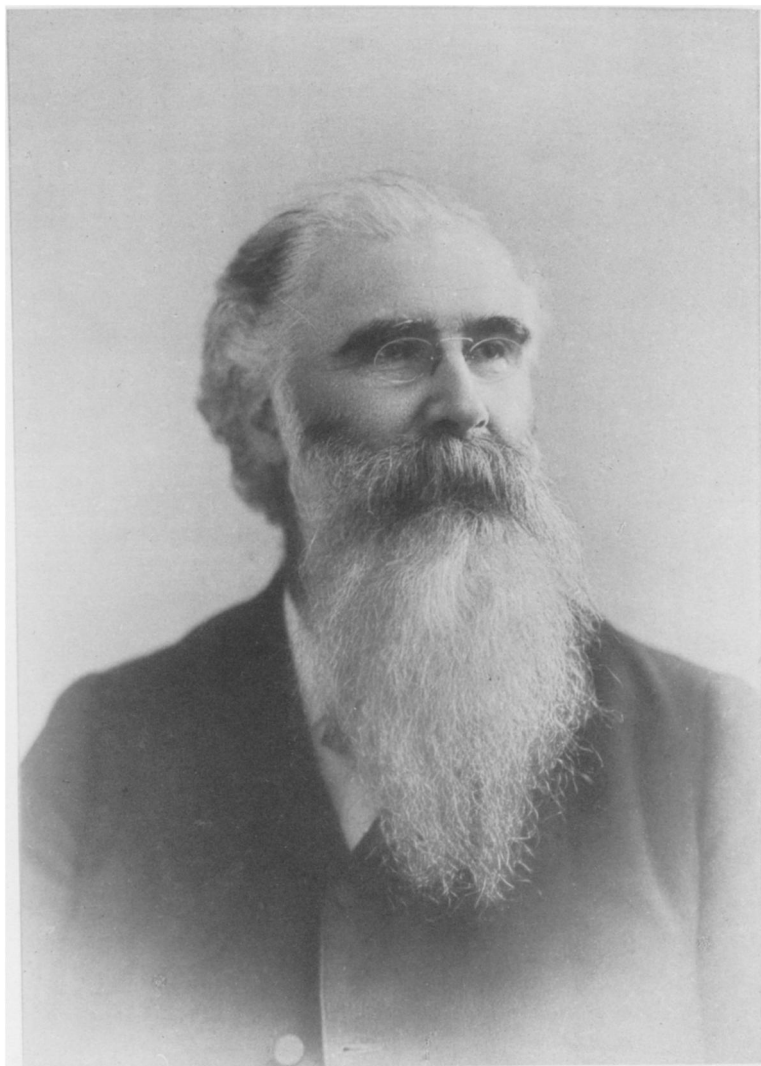
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*Bernard Brinitz*

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Biographical Sketch of Dr. J. Bernard Brinton.

[WITH PORTRAIT].

The botanical community of Philadelphia has met with an almost irreparable loss in the very sudden death, on December 6, 1894, of the distinguished scientist, Dr. J. Bernard Brinton, the founder of the Philadelphia Botanical Club.

The many expressions of sympathy and high regard which have been received by his family from his fellow members of the Academy of Natural Sciences, the Torrey Botanical Club and numerous other scientists with whom he was engaged in active correspondence, prove conclusively that his premature death causes a vacancy which will be difficult to fill.

He was preëminent in more than one respect ; most emphatically, however, in the happy faculty of imparting to others his own enthusiasm and love for the study of the Natural Sciences. He was noted for the accuracy of his observations in field excursions, in which he was generally recognized as the leader and guide.

His methods were always painstaking and careful, and in his aim to secure choice specimens no trouble, labor nor expense was too great. His botanical specimens were preserved by the most approved methods, mounted in the most artistic style and identified with the most scrupulous care. His mechanical ingenuity was frequently exercised in preparing specimens of fruits, stems and other organs, so as to advantageously exhibit their internal structure. In his desire for absolute accuracy he frequently sent difficult genera to monographers for scrutiny and revision.

This solicitude for accuracy made his herbarium exceedingly valuable for reference and comparison to his unnumbered friends, who were in the habit of congregating in his botanical workroom. This place, built as an addition to his home, was familiarly known as "The Den." Here he delighted in receiving his friends and exhibiting his scientific collections and numerous devices for facilitating botanical studies.

He was endowed with a marvellous memory for names and physical characteristics. This gift frequently enabled him to recognize specimens which he had not met with for many years. It was always a matter of gratification to him to surprise his scientific visitors with the demonstration of his mechanical skill as an amateur cabinet-maker. He personally constructed in the most skillful manner, his herbarium cases, tables, stands, microscopical cabinets, etc., with a degree of perfection rarely excelled by expert artisans. He also prepared, with that same mechanical skill, all his own collecting presses, which combined the several features of collecting portfolio and drying press. He was a microscopist of no ordinary ability, and took considerable interest in the application of this instrument in the investigation of vegetable histology. His collection of minerals in microscopic crystals has, perhaps, never been excelled in beauty and in the neatness displayed in their mounting. His dexterity in the dissection of botanical specimens was frequently envied by his less expert companions. While so ardently devoted to nature in her various manifestations, Dr. Brinton did not overlook the advantages of linguistic attainments. In his earlier life, much of his time was devoted to the study of German, in which language he conversed fluently. He was also proficient in Latin and French.

Physically, Dr. Brinton seemed to embody the highest expression of perfect manhood. His commanding presence and graceful bearing stamped him at once as a leader. His powerful frame enabled him to endure and overcome great hardship and fatigue.

Dr. J. Bernard Brinton was born near Waynesburg, Chester County, Penna., August 16, 1835. His parents belonged to the religious Society of Friends. His early education was received at this place and subsequently at the High School in Philadelphia,

during the short residence of the family in that city, previous to removal to a farm in Maryland, in 1848. He began the study of medicine in 1857 and matriculated at the Jefferson Medical College, from which school he was graduated on March 25, 1859.

During his college course, the attention of Prof. Samuel D. Gross was attracted to him by the assiduity displayed in his studies, and furthermore by the successful management of an aneurism case treated by digital compression. As a result he was appointed Chief of the Surgical Clinic soon after graduation. He lectured on Practical Anatomy at the Philadelphia School of Anatomy and Operative Surgery, and also conducted a Quiz on *Materia Medica*. From his graduation to the breaking out of the Civil War he was an active practitioner of medicine, and in 1860 was a delegate to the American Medical Association, held in New Haven, Conn.

But the fire of patriotism proved too strong for the peaceful tenets of his fathers, and led him early in the war to apply for the position of assistant surgeon in the regular army. He successfully passed the rigorous examination, and his commission was dated April 16, 1862, signed by the President, Abraham Lincoln, and Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War.

On September 14, 1863, he was appointed Medical Purveyor to the Army of the Potomac, and he retained that position to the close of the war. During his entire army life he continued his botanical studies and collection of plants. At this time it was his good fortune to meet another officer equally interested in the study of the same science, Maj. Gen. G. K. Warren. A wayside flower served as a means of introducing these officers, and the occasion of that meeting was a favorite reminiscence of Dr. Brinton. The collections he made during the Virginia campaign were captured by the Confederate, Col. Mosby, at Belle Plain, May 12, 1864, and burned with the supply wagons. Dr. Brinton himself barely escaped capture. May 13, 1865, he was brevetted Captain and Major for gallant and meritorious services, and on November 16th, of the same year, he resigned from the army. His services to the Union were marked by his usual application and devotion to his sense of duty; and his report at the close of his term of office was considered a remarkably accurate record for one handling a vast amount of material under such turbulent conditions.

Returning to Philadelphia, he continued in the practice of medicine for a few years. Desiring more leisure time for the study of his chosen science, he abandoned medicine and engaged in various manufacturing pursuits. On October 29, 1878, he was elected a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences, and in the same year he connected himself with the Botanical Section of that institution. He was faithful in attendance and contributed numerous specimens, notes and verbal communications. He was an indefatigable collector and made numerous excursions in Pennsylvania and neighboring States. He made a special study of the peculiar flora of the Pine Barrens of New Jersey, in which department he was recognized as an authority. He acceptably filled numerous positions of honor and trust in the Academy of Natural Sciences, and at the time of his death was a member of the Board of Councillors. During the session of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, in Philadelphia, in 1884, he was elected a member, and he acted as guide to an excursion of visiting botanists to the pine barren region of New Jersey.

Only the ardent lovers of nature can understand his feelings on that occasion, when the main object was to show, Dr. Asa Gray and Mr. Caruthers, President of the Linnæan Society, the secluded *Schizæa pusilla* Pursh. Nor can the joy of those gentleman be expressed when their eyes rested on that quaint fern form for the first time.

He was elected to active membership in the Torrey Botanical Club of New York, January, 1891. Although publishing but little on botanical subjects, he corresponded with most of the botanical authorities in America and made numerous exchanges. Perhaps his most important labor consisted in inducing the young to study botany, and his greatest pleasure seemed to be in imparting to others, either in the field or in his "den," a portion of his rich store of knowledge. Chiefly with this object in view, he founded the Philadelphia Botanical Club, in December, 1892, of which he was the President from its organization until the time of his decease.

The fundamental aim of the Club is to study the local flora and prepare an herbarium representing the plants found within a radius of fifty miles. Many of the members gratefully remember

the aid they have received in the study of the science from Dr Brinton, whom they regard as their botanical preceptor. An intimate friend, Professor F. Lamson-Scribner, has forcibly expressed this sentiment in the following language :

“Those who have been with Dr. Brinton in his botanical excursions, as I have, will say with me, that in the field he was a keen observer and zealous collector, observing and collecting with an enthusiasm which was always contagious to his party.”

“The results of these trips, which we enjoyed to the utmost, have enriched the herbaria of many scientific institutions and those of botanists in all parts of our country. His work and his conversation rarely failed to excite the ambition of others, and I am confident that many young men have received inspirations from their associations with Dr. Brinton, leading them to become better botanists or more earnest students.”

Dr. Brinton was married on November 13, 1862, to Sallie W. Clemens, of Philadelphia. A married daughter and two sons survive him. As a source of consolation, after the death of his wife, he engaged more earnestly in botanical studies. It is a peculiar coincidence that he had expressed an intention of retiring from the Presidency of the Botanical Club, and at the time of his decease had in preparation a farewell address. His last evening was spent at the home of a lifelong friend, and the following verses were discussed, which now seem to have fittingly foreshadowed the final sleep that should soon come to one of the participants :

‘Oever de stillen Straten,  
Geit klar de Glockenslag,  
God' Nacht! Din Hart will slapen;  
Un' Morgen is ook een Dag.

Noch eenmal lat uns spräken;  
Goden Abend, gode Nacht!  
De Maand schient up de Däken  
Uns Herrgott, hält de Wacht,”

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*Committee.*